

# Comorian languages

**Comorian** (*Shikomori* or *Shimasiwa*, the "language of islands") is the name given to a group of four Bantu languages spoken in the Comoro Islands, an archipelago in the southwestern Indian Ocean between Mozambique and Madagascar. It is named as one of the official languages of the Union of the Comoros in the Comorian constitution. Shimaore, one of the languages, is spoken on the disputed island of Mayotte, a French department claimed by Comoros. Like Swahili, the Comorian languages are Sabaki languages, part of the Bantu language family. Each island has its own language and the four are conventionally divided into two groups: the eastern group is composed of *Shindzuani* (spoken on Ndzuani) and *Shimaore* (Mayotte), while the western group is composed of *Shimwali* (Mwali) and *Shingazija* (Ngazidja). Although the languages of different groups are not usually mutually intelligible, only sharing about 80% of their lexicon, there is mutual intelligibility between the languages within each group, suggesting that Shikomori should be considered as a two language groups rather than four distinct languages.<sup>[6]</sup>

Historically, the language was written in the Ajami script. The French colonial administration introduced the Latin script, of which a modified version was officially decreed in 2009.<sup>[7]</sup> Many Comorians now use the Latin script when writing the Comorian language although the Ajami script is still widely used, especially by women.

It is the language of *Umodja wa Masiwa*, the national anthem.

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## Phonology

The consonants and vowels in the Comorian languages:

Comorian	
<i>shikomori</i> /شِڪومِرِ	
Native to	Comoros and Mayotte
Region	Throughout Comoros and Mayotte; also in Madagascar and Réunion
Native speakers	800,000 in Comoros <sup>[1]</sup> and 300,000 in Mayotte <sup>[2][3]</sup> (2011 and 2007)
Language family	<div>Niger–Congo <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li> Atlantic–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Volta-Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Benue–Congo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Southern Bantoid<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Northeast Coast Bantu<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sabaki<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Comorian</b></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></li></ul></div>
Writing system	Arabic <div>Latin</div>
Official status	
Official language in	<span><span></span></span> Comoros
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Variously: <div>zdj – Ngazidja dialect</div> <div>wni – Ndzwani (Anjouani) dialect</div> <div>swb – Maore dialect</div> <div>wlc – Mwali dialect</div>
Glottolog	como1260 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/como1260</span> ) <sup>[4]</sup>

## Vowels

Guthrie code

G.44<sup>[5]</sup>

	Front	Back
Close	i ĭ	u ũ
Mid	e	o
Open	a ã	

## Consonants

		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	voiceless	p			t		ʈ		k	
	voiced	(b)			(d)		ɖ		g	
	implosive	ɓ			ɗ					
	vl. prenasal	ᵐp			ᵐt		ᵐʈ		ᵐk	
	vd. prenasal	(ᵐb)			(ᵐd)		ᵐɖ		ᵐg	
	impl. prenasal	ᵐɓ			ᵐɗ					
Affricate	voiceless				ʈs	ʈʃ				
	voiced				ɖz	ɖʒ				
	vl. prenasal				ᵐʈs	ᵐʈʃ				
	vd. prenasal				ᵐɖz	ᵐɖʒ				
Fricative	voiceless		f	θ	s	ʃ			x	h
	voiced	β	v	ð	z	ʒ			ɣ	
Nasal		m			n			ɲ		
Approximant		w			l			j		
Trill					r					

The consonants *mb*, *nd*, *b*, *d* are phonetically recognized as ranging from [ᵐb~ᵐb], [ᵐd~ᵐd], [b~b], [d~d].

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4. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Comorian Bantu" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/como1260>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
5. Jouni Filip Maho, 2009. *New Updated Guthrie List Online* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180203191542/http://goto.glocalnet.net/mahopapers/nuglonline.pdf>)
6. Breslar, 1981; Ahmed-Chamanga, 2010
7. Ahmed-Chamanga, 2010

## Further reading

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## External links

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- [Shingazidja \(http://www.chez.com/shingazidja/\)](http://www.chez.com/shingazidja/)
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